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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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TAGS: [EWWT](#) [PBST](#) [PHSA](#) [PREL](#) [KS](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: LIANCOURT ROCKS: ROK SHOULD "PAY A COST"

REF: A. STATE 109302 (302236Z JUN 06)

[1](#)B. TOKYO 3623 (291034Z JUN 06)

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer. Reason: 1.4 (b)(d).

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: On July 3, the DCM delivered reftel A points to MOFA Asian Affairs DG Sasae, urging restraint and emphasizing that our common agenda on North Korea should not be side-tracked by the Liancourt Rocks dispute. DG Sasae said FM Aso would try this evening to call ROK FM Ban, but such a call was unlikely to influence the ROKG on the matter because the Blue House, with whom the GOJ had no communication, was calling the shots. Expressing strong disappointment with the U.S. even-handed approach, DG Sasae asserted that the GOJ, but not the ROK, was exercising restraint. He wondered aloud why the ROK was pushing the issue now, adding that it would be unacceptable for the ROK to send the research vessel into the disputed waters and then expect things to return to normal. Instead, the ROK, which he accused of ignoring the effect of its actions on overall Japan-ROK relations, would have to "pay a cost," he asserted. DG Sasae thought the next 48 hours were the last chance to prevent the ROK from going forward with the survey operation, strongly implying that the USG should use that time to try to dissuade the ROK from such a course. He added that the GOJ was not giving up on diplomacy, but concluded that the situation was "quite dangerous." End Summary.

[1](#)2. (S) The DCM met July 3 with MOFA Asian Affairs Director General Kenichiro Sasae to convey reftel A points. Noting that the U.S. took no position on the competing claims in the disputed area, he said the U.S. continued to urge restraint. Pointing out the possibility of a Taepodong-II launch, the DCM emphasized that our shared interests in dealing with North Korea should not be side-tracked by the current dispute involving the Liancourt Rocks.

[1](#)3. (S) DG Sasae said the GOJ understood that the ROK research vessel had left port on the evening of July 2, earlier than expected, because of heavy ROK media interest. The ROK, he pointed out, had still not provided any official notice about the vessel to the GOJ. "We don't know what they're thinking," Sasae mused, by moving at this time into the disputed waters.

[1](#)4. (S) Sasae related that, upon his return from the G-8 summit, FM Aso had tried to call ROK FM Ban last night, but was unable to reach him due to schedule conflicts. Aso would try again this evening, but Sasae discounted the chances that such a call would influence the ROKG, because the Blue House, not MOFAT, was calling the shots on this matter. Sasae added that the GOJ had no communication with the Blue House, which

made the situation "dangerous."

15. (S) Expressing strong disappointment with the U.S. even-handed message, Sasae asserted that the GOJ had shown restraint so far, but not the ROKG. If the ROKG were to stop the survey ship even at this point, there would be no problem, he said. But the ROKG should not think that it could dispatch the survey ship into the contested waters, accept a protest from the GOJ, and then expect things to simply return to normal. Instead, the ROK would have to, in Sasae's words, "pay a cost" for ignoring the effect such actions would have on overall relations. He thought in response Japan would decide to go ahead with its own survey.

16. (S) DG Sasae thought the next 48 hours were the last chance to prevent the ROK from going forward with the survey operation, strongly implying that the USG should use that time to try to dissuade the ROK from such a course. He added that the GOJ was not giving up on diplomacy, but concluded that the situation was "quite dangerous."
SCHIEFFER